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ABSTRACT

This study compared the responses of 100 randomly selected students from a rural and an urban Missouri community-junior college campus. A stressful situation was defined as any one that causes the student to be concerned, anxious, or uncomfortable. Respondents were to indicate for each of 25 items whether certain situations caused them great, moderate, little, or no stress. Results were reported for the following subgroups of urban and rural students: male, female, transfer, and vocational-technical. Urban subgroup respondents were more consistent than the rural subgroup in their ratings of the highest and lowest stress-producing situations. Significant differences at the .05 level were indicated for the following situations, using the Chi-square test: impersonality of college life, Vietnam war, loneliness, lack of student representation on college committees, and pressure from too many responsibilities. Urban students indicated significantly greater degrees of stress resulting from the first two, and rural students indicated significantly greater degrees of stress resulting from the last three. Contradictions between stated college teaching practices and what actually goes on in the classroom produced significantly more stress for rural transfer students than for urban transfer students. In conclusion, it should be noted that urban students were more concerned with national problems (Vietnam war, draft) compared with the more local concerns of rural students (loneliness, pressure). (JO)

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A COMPARISON OF THE RESPONSES OF URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS TO A SURVEY ON STRESS PRODUCING SITUATIONS

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The concept that stress is a major sphere of influence on college students has received a great deal of attention in the literature. Many educators, psychologists, and physicians have concluded from their experience that stress does affect a college student's reaction and adjustment to the college experience. As Snyder (1966) stated, it may be the "invisible curriculum."

A review of the literature seems to indicate that a wide variety of stress producing situations exist in the collegiate environment. Such things as the impersonality of university life (Frank, 1966), the relationship of a college education to the outside world (National Student Association, 1965), and competition for grades (Conley and Folger, 1965), all play a part in the stress producing situations of a college or university.

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Many of the articles on student stress have dealt with four-year colleges or universities. Few, if any, have dealt with the community college student.

The purpose of this study was to determine and compare the responses of randomly selected urban and rural community college students to a survey sheet composed of possible stress producing situations.

METHOD

Definition of Terms

Stress. As used in this survey, stress is defined as any situation, as perceived by the student, that causes him to be concerned, anxious, or causes him discomfort.

Transfer. This term defines a student who intends to transfer to a four-year college or university.

Urban. Urban refers to a metropolitan area of 100,000 persons or more.

Rural. Rural refers to a city of less than 30,000 persons.

Stress points. Total stress points were calculated by allowing a weight of three points for each student listing a particular item as the one causing him great stress, two points for moderate stress, one point for little stress, and no points for each listing an item as the one causing him no stress.

For example, for a particular item, if five students listed the item as causing them great stress, four listed it as causing them moderate stress, three listed it as causing them little stress and two listed the item as causing them no stress, the total stress points for this item would be twenty-six.

These stress points were used to determine rank order for each of the twenty-five items in the instrument.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were drawn from an urban and rural community college campus in the state of Missouri. Using a table of random numbers and the enrollment lists for all English classes taught at each school, a sample of 100 students from each of the

colleges was drawn. The survey was then administered to each of these students during their regular classroom periods.

The Instrument

The instrument used in this study was one designed by this researcher. It consisted of a compilation of items from various articles on student stress and from comments made by students that indicated certain conditions that caused them stress.

The instrument contained twenty-five stress items listed with a forced response of no, little, moderate or great stress for each item.

The Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Using the .05 level of confidence, is there a difference in the manner in which the selected respondents on each campus rank the stress producing situations?
2. Using the .05 level of confidence, is there a significant difference between the responses of the selected urban and rural community college students?

Statistical Tools

The instrument used in this survey reflected frequency of responses to the various stress items. For this reason, chi square analysis and a .05 level of confidence was used to determine whether or not significant differences existed between the various groups compared.

RESULTS

The statements from the instrument used are presented in rank order form in Tables 1-8.

Insert Tables 1-4 about here

While there was certainly not a perfect relationship in the manner in which the stress items were ranked by the various groups, it is interesting to note that the urban respondents consistently ranked items 19 and 22 as causing them the most stress and consistently rated items 9, 13, and 30 as causing them the least amount of stress.

Insert Tables 5-8 about here

A perusal of Tables 5-8 indicate that the rural respondents were not so consistent in their rankings. The groups in Tables 5 and 7 did rate item 19 as the one causing them the most stress. However, the group in Table 6 rated item 8 as the one causing them the most stress while the group in Table 8 rated item 25 as the one that caused them the most stress.

In this age of anti-war and draft protests, it is interesting to note that none of the respondents in this study listed item 14 or 17 as the item causing them the most stress.

Insert Table 9 about here

Table 9 presents the results of chi-square tests of the difference between the responses of all the respondents on the urban versus rural campuses. Statements for which not signigicant differences were found were omitted from the table.

An interesting parallel is indicated in Table 9. Students on the large urban campus were concerned about the impersonality of their environment while students on the small rural campus were concerned with the problem of loneliness.

Further tests of chi-square differences were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between transfer, male, female, and vocational-technical respondents on both of the campuses used in this study. The only significant difference found was in the comparisons of the responses of the urban transfer students to the rural transfer students. The rural transfer students ranked the item dealing with the contradictions between stated college teaching practices and what actually goes on in the classroom as of great concern to them. In fact, this difference was significant at the .01 level of confidence.

DISCUSSION

As with studies that involve a surveying of student opinion or populations, a great many questions and possible areas of future study arose.

The fact that six of the eight groups studies indicated a great concern about the actual teaching practices of their respective colleges should certainly delineate an area for future study by cooperating colleges. Furthermore, the fact that all of the respondents rated the item dealing with a lack of student representation on college committees among the top six items causing them stress, should also warrant further investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

The lack of sophistication of the instrument makes the drawing of conclusions difficult. This researcher did, however, make this observation. The urban respondents tended to rank those items dealing with national problems such as the Viet Nam War and the draft higher then those in the rural areas. Those in the rural areas tended to be more concerned with the problems of loneliness and the pressure from too many responsibilities. This fact leads me to conclude that urban community college students may receive more stress from situations outside their college and home environment than do those students attending rural community colleges.

The implication here for urban community college counselors would be to discuss with various students the possibility of scheduling more activities and symposiums that deal with national situations that are of concern to their student body. Further study of this area is certainly in order for urban community college counselors.

The rural community college counselors should explore with their students activities that might tend to reduce the feelings of loneliness on their particular campus.

Lest any hasty conclusions be drawn, one note of caution must be inserted. The instrument used in this survey was largely untried. Hence, the best any community college counselor could do would be to research, thoroughly, those situations or that climate on his campus that may create stress producing situations for the student body.

TABLE 1

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Male Students on the Urban Campus

	Statements	Total Stress Points
19.	Contradiction between stated college teaching practices and what actually goes on in the classroom	158
22.	Lack of student representation on college committees	154
21.	Loneliness	147
12.	Impersonality of college life	147
27.	My desire for popularity	145
8.	Financial problems	144
23.	The pressure to conform to college	139
10.	Competition for grades	139
25.	Conflict of my personal standards of sex conduct and practices among college students	130
17.	The draft	134
20.	Being in college against my will or desire	132
26.	My physical health	130
6.	Indecision about career choice	129
24.	The moral code of college students	128
11.	My religious convictions	120
7.	Difficulties with my family	114
18.	My desire to find a marriage partner	113
15.	Relationship of my college education to the outside world	107

TABLE 1
(continued)

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected
Male Students on the Urban Campus

Statements	Total Stress Points
16. Racial injustice	103
29. Concern with my personal physical appearance	96
28. Being exposed to political ideas different from my own	90
9. Lack of dates	85
13. Getting along with others	82
14. Viet Nam War	81
30. Pressure from too many responsibilities	76

TABLE 2

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Female Students on the Urban Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 19	113
Statement 22	108
Statement 23	105
Statement 24	100
Statement 27	100
Statement 20	100
Statement 17	98
Statement 21	97
Statement 10	97
Statement 25	96
Statement 8	88
Statement 12	86
Statement 6	84
Statement 26	83
Statement 18	82
Statement 11	80
Statement 15	78
Statement 7	72
Statement 14	66
Statement 28	65
Statement 16	64
Statement 30	62
Statement 29	58
Statement 9	55
Statement 13	50

TABLE 3

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Transfer Students on the Urban Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 19	138
Statement 22	132
Statement 8	121
Statement 21	121
Statement 27	121
Statement 23	118
Statement 20	115
Statement 25	115
Statement 10	113
Statement 17	113
Statement 24	109
Statement 6	108
Statement 12	108
Statement 26	104
Statement 11	98
Statement 7	91
Statement 18	89
Statement 15	88
Statement 16	79
Statement 29	73
Statement 14	67
Statement 28	65
Statement 9	60
Statement 30	59
Statement 13	59

TABLE 4

Rank Order of Stress Items
by Selected Vocational-Technical
Students on the Urban Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 19	133
Statement 22	130
Statement 17	129
Statement 23	126
Statement 12	125
Statement 27	124
Statement 21	123
Statement 10	123
Statement 25	120
Statement 24	118
Statement 20	117
Statement 8	111
Statement 26	109
Statement 18	106
Statement 6	105
Statement 11	102
Statement 15	97
Statement 7	95
Statement 28	90
Statement 16	88
Statement 29	81
Statement 14	80
Statement 9	80
Statement 30	79
Statement 13	73

TABLE 5

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Transfer Students on the Rural Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 19	157
Statement 25	151
Statement 27	146
Statement 8	145
Statement 20	143
Statement 22	142
Statement 17	139
Statement 26	137
Statement 24	136
Statement 10	133
Statement 11	131
Statement 23	129
Statement 21	122
Statement 12	116
Statement 18	111
Statement 15	108
Statement 29	106
Statement 6	101
Statement 28	99
Statement 7	94
Statement 9	94
Statement 30	91
Statement 14	90
Statement 16	78
Statement 13	70

TABLE 6

Rank Order of Stress Items
by Selected Vocational-Technical
Students on the Rural Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 25	83
Statement 20	80
Statement 6	78
Statement 8	77
Statement 11	77
Statement 26	76
Statement 22	76
Statement 17	75
Statement 10	72
Statement 12	71
Statement 27	71
Statement 19	70
Statement 14	65
Statement 16	64
Statement 7	64
Statement 23	62
Statement 21	61
Statement 24	61
Statement 29	60
Statement 18	60
Statement 15	60
Statement 28	56
Statement 13	54
Statement 9	52
Statement 30	39

TABLE 7

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Male Students on the Rural Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 19	175
Statement 25	157
Statement 20	156
Statement 17	150
Statement 22	148
Statement 27	147
Statement 24	145
Statement 8	143
Statement 10	143
Statement 11	142
Statement 26	140
Statement 21	130
Statement 23	129
Statement 15	120
Statement 6	117
Statement 12	116
Statement 29	116
Statement 18	112
Statement 28	109
Statement 14	104
Statement 7	103
Statement 9	100
Statement 30	91
Statement 16	84
Statement 13	82

TABLE 8

Rank Order of Stress Items by Selected Female Students on the Rural Campus

Statement Numbers	Total Stress Points
Statement 8	79
Statement 25	73
Statement 26	73
Statement 27	70
Statement 22	70
Statement 20	67
Statement 11	66
Statement 17	64
Statement 6	62
Statement 23	62
Statement 10	62
Statement 12	61
Statement 18	59
Statement 16	58
Statement 7	55
Statement 21	53
Statement 24	52
Statement 19	52
Statement 14	51
Statement 29	50
Statement 15	48
Statement 28	46
Statement 9	46
Statement 13	42
Statement 30	39

TABLE 9

Result of Chi-Square Analysis of Differences
Between Responses of all Respondents
on the Urban and Rural Campuses

Statement on which significant differences were found	Campus indicating greatest degree of stress	Campus indicating least degree of stress	X^2	DF
12. Impersonality of college life	Urban	Rural	18.52*	9
14. Viet Nam War	Urban	Rural	17.02*	9
21. Loneliness	Rural	Urban	16.94*	9
22. Lack of student representation on college committees	Rural	Urban	17.81*	9
30. Pressure from too many responsibilities	Rural	Urban	18.739*	9

* Significant at the .05 level.

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APPENDIX - Instrument Used in This Survey

Item Number	Response Number			
	1 No Stress	2 Little Stress	3 Moderate Stress	4 Great Stress
6. Indecision about career choice				
7. Difficulties with my family				
8. Financial problems				
9. Lack of dates				
10. Competition for grades				
11. My religious convictions				
12. Impersonality of college life				
13. Getting along with others				
14. "Viet-Nam war"				
15. Relationship of my college education to the "outside" world				
16. Racial injustice				
17. "The draft"				
18. My desire to find a marriage partner				
19. Contradiction between stated college teaching practices and what actually goes on in the classroom				
20. Being in college against my will or desire				
21. Loneliness				
22. Lack of student representation on college committees				
23. The pressure to conform to college regulations				
24. The moral code of college students				
25. Conflict of my personal standards of sex conduct and practices among college students				
26. My physical health				
27. My desire for popularity				
28. Being exposed to political ideas different from my own				
29. Concern with my personal physical appearance				
30. Pressure from too many responsibilities				

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